

AMENDMENTS

In the Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A monolithic ceramic filter comprising a honeycomb structure comprising cells of a unitary extruded structure along an elongation axis and partitioned by a partition wall formed of a porous ceramic material, wherein an increased thickness portion of said partition wall of the honeycomb structure has an increased thickness as measured in a direction normal to a surface of the wall as compared to a remaining basic portion of the partition wall, said increased thickness portion constituting a reduced flow resistance portion which continuously extends from an interior of the honeycomb structure to a lateral outer wall surface of the honeycomb structure so as to form a continuous flow path of reduced flow resistance as compared to the flow resistance of the remaining basic portion of the partition wall within the increased thickness portion along the partition wall extending over a plurality of cells to reach said lateral outer wall surface of the honeycomb structure,

said lateral outer wall surface extending substantially parallel to the elongation axis of the cells, and

said increased thickness portion continuously extending over substantially an entire axial length of the honeycomb structure along the elongation axis of the cells.

2. (Previously Presented) The ceramic filter as defined in claim 1, wherein said reduced flow resistance portion has at least one filtrate discharge conduit opening extending to said lateral outer wall surface of the honeycomb structure within the increased thickness of the reduced flow resistance portion.

3. (Canceled)

4. (Currently Amended) The ceramic filter as defined in claim 1, wherein the reduced flow resistance portion comprises a plurality of wall portions of increased thickness as compared to the thickness of said remaining basic portion of the partition wall, said plurality of wall

portions of increased thickness extending from one cell opening end of the honeycomb structure to another cell opening end ~~thereof~~ of the honeycomb structure.

5. (Currently Amended) The ceramic filter as defined in claim 3, wherein said reduced flow resistance portion comprises a plurality of wall portions of increased thickness as measured in a direction normal to a surface of the wall which extend parallel to each other.

6. (Original) The ceramic filter as defined in claim 2, wherein the filtrate discharge conduit opening comprises bores extending transverse of the honeycomb structure.

7. (Currently Amended) The ceramic filter as defined in claim 6, wherein ~~[[the]]~~ said bores are disposed parallel to each other.

8. (Previously Presented) The ceramic filter as defined in claim 1 or 4, wherein the increased thickness portion of the reduced flow resistance portion has a thickness that is 2 to 5 times the thickness of said remaining basic portion of the partition wall of the honeycomb structure.

9. (Withdrawn) A monolithic ceramic filter comprising a honeycomb structure which comprises communication voids separated from cells of the honeycomb structure of the filter cell partition walls, said voids communicating with the lateral outside of said honeycomb structure over the entire length of the honeycomb structure and extending over the entire axial length thereof.

10. (Withdrawn) The ceramic filter as defined in claim 9, wherein said communication voids are each a groove-shaped recess extending from the outer peripheral wall of said honeycomb structure toward the inside.

11. (Withdrawn) The ceramic filter as defined in claim 9, wherein the honeycomb structure has such a shape as to permit production thereof by extrusion molding.

12. (Withdrawn) The ceramic filter as defined in claim 9 which comprises an end frame surrounding the honeycomb structure fitted on at least one end thereof.

13. (Withdrawn) The ceramic filter as defined in claim 12 wherein said end frame has protrusions engaged in said communication voids to close the same at an end of the honeycomb structure.

14. (Withdrawn) The ceramic filter as defined in claim 11, wherein said communication voids extend from the inside of the honeycomb structure except central part of the honeycomb structure in the transverse direction thereof.

15. (Withdrawn) The ceramic filter as defined in claim 11, where in said communication voids extend from the outer peripheral wall toward the inside ending at an intermediate position.

16. (Withdrawn) The ceramic filter as defined in claim 15, wherein said communication voids extend alternatively from one side of the outer peripheral wall and from the opposite side thereof as viewed in the cross section of the honeycomb structure.

17. (Previously Presented) The ceramic filter as defined in claim 1 or 4, wherein the honeycomb structure has a filtration membrane on a surface facing each cell of the honeycomb structure.

18. (Previously Presented) The ceramic filter as defined in claim 17, wherein an intermediate porous layer is disposed between the honeycomb structure and the filtration membrane.

19. (Previously Presented) The ceramic filter as defined in claim 17, wherein the filtration membrane is a porous ceramic having a smaller pore size than that of the honeycomb structure.

20. (Withdrawn) The ceramic filter as defined in claim 9, wherein said honeycomb structure further comprises a flow resistance relaxing portion which is formed of a thickened portion of the cell partition wall, said thickened portion extending from the inside of the honeycomb structure to an outer wall thereof.

21. (Previously Presented) The ceramic filter as defined in claim 1 or 4, wherein the increased thickness portion of the reduced flow resistance portion has a thickness that is 1.5 to 10

times the thickness of said remaining basic portion of the partition wall of the honeycomb structure.

22. (Withdrawn) The ceramic filter as defined in claim 1, 2, 9 or 20, wherein said honeycomb structure has a cross section with symmetry.